

LISTING OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-5. (canceled).

6. (Previously Presented) The communication connection merge method as set forth in claim 24, wherein said connection-oriented network is a multi-protocol label switching network, said communication connections are label switched paths, and said node is a label switching router.

7. (Previously Presented) The communication connection merge method as set forth in claim 24, wherein said connection-oriented network is an asynchronous transfer mode network, said communication connections are virtual channels, and said tunneling communication connection is a virtual path, and said node is an asynchronous transfer mode switch.

Claims 8-14. (canceled).

15. (Currently Amended) A node which consolidates communication connections ~~having different destination nodes~~ in a connection-oriented network, comprising:

a processor which determines whether a tunneling communication connection is present both in a first route of an existing communication connection and in a second route of a second communication connection, wherein said first and second routes have different destination nodes in said connection-oriented network;

wherein said processor modifies a parameter of said tunneling communication connection to accommodate merging said second communication connection in said tunneling communication connection; and

wherein said processor merges said existing communication connection and said second communication connection on said tunneling communication connection.

16. (Previously Presented) The node as set forth in claim 15, wherein said existing communications connection is a tunneling communication connection.

17. (Previously Presented) The node as set forth in claim 15, wherein said connection-oriented network is a multi-protocol label switching network, said communication connections are label switched paths, and said node is a label switching router.

18. (Previously Presented) The node as set forth in claim 15, wherein said connection-oriented network is an asynchronous transfer mode network, said communication connection is a virtual channel and said tunneling communication connection is a virtual path, and said node is an asynchronous transfer mode switch.

19. (Previously Presented) The node of claim 15, wherein said processor creates a tunneling communication connection capable of accommodating said existing communication connection, wherein said tunneling communication connection is in said first route and said second route.

Claims 20-22. (canceled).

23. (Previously Presented) The node of claim 19, wherein said second communications connection is a new communication connection.

24. (Currently Amended) A communication merge method in a connection-oriented network which consolidates an existing communication connection ~~having a first route to a first destination node with a second communication connection having a second route to a second destination node, wherein said first and second destination nodes are different,~~ comprising:

determining whether a tunneling communication connection is present ~~from a third node to a fourth node, wherein said third and fourth nodes are in both said first route and said second route~~ in both a first route to a first destination node with a second communication connection having a second route to a second destination node in said connection-oriented network, wherein said first node and said second node are different nodes;

modifying a parameter of said tunneling communication connection to accommodate a merger of said communication connections, if said tunneling communication connection is present; and

merging said communication connections on said tunneling communication connection.

25. (Previously Presented) The communication merge method of claim 24, wherein said existing communications connection is a tunneling communication connection.

26. (Currently Amended) The communication merge method of claim 24, wherein said method further comprises:

creating a new tunneling communication connection from a ~~fifth-third~~ node to a ~~sixth-fourth~~ node, wherein said ~~fifth-third~~ and ~~sixth-fourth~~ nodes are in said first route and second route, if said tunneling communication connection is not present.

27. (Previously Presented) The communication merge method of claim 26, wherein said second communication connection is a new communication connection.

28. (New) The communication merge method of claim 24, wherein said method further comprises:

stacking a label assigned for the tunneling communication connection in a shim header.